

The Munro College - Fallout: When Role Models Stop Role Playing.

I have read with concern the recent fallout from the decision of the Minister to overturn the decision of the Munro School Board on account of a procedural error or irregularity. I am concerned that there is this unfortunate turn of events spurred on by the leadership when the system actually works. In these circumstances I feel duty bound to attempt to shed some light on the matter in terms of the way in which the decision is to be understood. This statement is not intended to support the decision by the Minister one way or the other, in other words I am not commenting on the merits of the decision. This is a mere outline of the manner in which the system or the process employed by the Minister works and is intended to work and that an understanding of it is crucial to appreciating the significance of his involvement in the matter and his decision.

The Commonwealth, generally speaking, has two systems of adjudication the one being the traditional courts and the second being in context of administrative agencies, boards or tribunals such as a school board. The latter is mainly concerned with public law and more specifically with procedural law. It has to do with administrative agencies or boards acting within their jurisdiction and affording citizens

an opportunity to be heard now coming under the rubric of the procedural fairness doctrine. The mandate of these agencies is usually set out in their constituting statute, in this case the Education Act and its Regulations. It means that they are bound by the terms of their appointment and to the extent that they act outside of their jurisdiction then there is a right of appeal or an entitlement to appeal on the part of the aggrieved person to the Minister or to the Courts. In this case the allegation was that the school board acted outside of its jurisdiction as a consequence of which there was an appeal to the Minister. The Minister accepted the submissions of the complainants and has ruled. Provided that this is within the authority of the Minister as per the statute then what is the complaint? If the Board thinks that the Minister is wrong or acted outside his jurisdiction then they can apply to the Court for Judicial Review of the Minister's decision.

I am concerned that those that I consider to be role models have not made an attempt to understand the decision and in turn to play their role to ensure that everyone else and especially the rest of the student body and the general populace understands. Instead, the situation was punctuated with controversy and resignations with actions and counter actions. I am disappointed because this confirms an unpublished article

that I read wherein it was stated that leaders must lead and that in Jamaica we tend to play the game of following the leader. If this is so, role models and leaders need to be very conscious about their actions or inactions as the last thing I read following on the heels of the resignations was an attempt to bar the students from boarding facilities and further that the prefect body was planning some type of action. A prefect body is school leadership and for the most part may be leaders of tomorrow but the example set for them was not one that enabled them to play their role to listen, learn, understand and explain so that we may have a brighter future.

I appreciate that the conduct of the young men was not a laudable one but we are to be careful to act with our intellect and not with our emotions even when the circumstances are such as in this case to cause our emotions to rise boiling point.
